

Practical tips for Brahmacharya - Swami Srikantananda

Deep-rooted lustful thoughts in the subconscious mind will make their presence felt, sometimes even more violently and with tremendous force, making a person absolutely helpless. When such thoughts arise, one need not be afraid or nervous. Let us face them boldly and they will disappear into thin air. When you are overpowered by lustful thoughts, introspect, analyse, discriminate and replace them with another set of powerful and positive thoughts and you will succeed in driving them out.

1) Introspection:

- i) O my mind, why are you brooding over such dirty thoughts? Don't you know I am a student? I have to concentrate on my studies. [If I fail in my examinations I will get a scolding from my parents and teachers, my friends will also discard me; moreover, for a student like me, it is a sin to think of lustful thoughts. So, please concentrate on study and give up thinking of evil thoughts.
- ii) O my mind, you want to enjoy sexual pleasures. Don't you know that for students, indulgence in sexual pleasures is a great sin? If something goes wrong how can I show my face to my parents, relatives, friends and society? Veerya, a precious gift of God, is not meant for wasting through indulgence. It will only make me weak and bereft of energy and vigour.
- iii) O my mind, don't think that nobody will know about your immoral deeds. You may be able to hide your heinous deeds from others; but what about God, who is always sitting in your heart as the innermost Self. He knows everything about you, your thoughts, intentions, words, deeds and everything else. How can you cheat Him?
- iv) O my mind, after committing blunders people go for abortion etc. Is it not a sin to kill innocent life? Do you want to indulge in such sinful deeds?
- v) O my mind, this body of mine is a temple of God. He dwells within me as the light of consciousness. Is it not my duty to keep this temple pure and clean to receive His blessings? If I indulge in wrong deeds God will be displeased with me.
- vi) O my mind, my parents have full faith and trust in me. They have a very high opinion about me. They love me greatly and can never doubt my character. They have given me full freedom. Should I deceive them through such indulgence? If I do something wrong I will be causing untold suffering to my parents. Because of my misbehaviour the entire society will look down upon them.
- vii) O my mind, if I indulge in sexual pleasure before marriage, I will be cheating and deceiving my would-be wife or husband. After marriage if the truth comes out, it will only create suspicion which may lead to misunderstandings, quarrels, harassment, doubts and even separation and divorce. Should I take such a risk?



viii) O my mind, if I waste all my energy before marriage, I will be unfit for married life. I will be physically weak, mentally imbalanced, intellectually poor and spiritually bankrupt. In such a case how will I be able to run my family?

ix) Inspired by the ideal of Brahmacharya, there are many young boys and girls leading a celibate life in order to attain purity of mind to realise God. There are many brahmacharis and sannayasis, nuns, sisters, staying in Ashramas, convents and serving society. If they are able to practise life-long Brahmacharya, why not I also try, at least a bit of it? Even today, when people are practising this ideal of Brahmacharya, certainly it is not impossible.

x) O my mind, don't you know that people commit crimes forced by this most dangerous enemy of man, lust. One impulse of lust makes their entire life miserable. They have to spend their whole life in a prison house away from their near and dear ones, kith and kin. Every day you read in the paper such cases of rape and murder caused by this deadly enemys; still you hanker after that. For temporary enjoyment you will have to suffer all your life. Poor prisoners! How they weep and cry to meet their relatives and friends but are denied an opportunity to do so. What is the use of repenting after the mistakes have been committed? So, be alert, beware, be careful. Such powerful suggestions will make your mind serious and thoughtful. Once you are able to convince your mind, it will become your great friend and will protect you always as your very close and dear friend.

2. Study:

Books are our best friends only when we make the right selection. Otherwise, books can be the most dangerous enemies. Today, the entire market is flooded with all types of books. Those who are genuinely interested in practising Brahmacharya should never touch such literature which stimulate the desire for sexual enjoyment. It is an unfortunate state that day and night vulgarity, obscenity, and provocative pictures, scenes, literature are displayed through newspapers, magazines, and tele media. Today, youngsters are attracted by such literature. They are corrupting their minds by reading such dirty books without discrimination only to land into trouble . They are not aware of the amount of harm they are doing to themselves. The impressions created by reading such books on the subconscious mind can lead them to many psychological and mental disturbances. The habit of reading good, positive, educative, thought-provoking, inspiring, and strengthening literature alone can help them to build right character and total personality. For modern youth, Swami Vivekananda's literature can serve this purpose. It is most relevant, practical and inspiring, particularly for youth to develop perfect character. The mind needs food in the form of great ideas to think and practise. Study of lives and teachings of great personalities and scriptures will satisfy the hunger of the mind which will result in good conduct, behaviour and character.

3. Japa:

(Repetition of the Divine Name) The divine name is a powerful weapon to destroy the demon of lust. Great people have demonstrated the power of the divine name. They could conquer not only lust but all other negative emotions such as anger, greed. Fear, etc., just by repeating the divine name. Repetition of

the divine name has tremendous power to root out all negative emotions from the subconscious mind. Whenever you get lustful thoughts, just start repeating God's name. Do it mentally and let no one know what is happening within your mind. The mind cannot think of two thoughts at a time. The moment you start repeating God's name, lustful thoughts will vanish in a moment like vapour. The dark cloud of lust will be carried away by the strong wind of the divine name. Whenever your mind is free, engage it in Japa; otherwise, it will go on brooding over evil thoughts. If you continue the habit of Nama-japa with faith and devotion, it will not only help you to conquer lust but will work like a shield to protect you from psychological disorders.

4. Meditation:

Meditation is a scientific and systematic process through which we can erase the deep-rooted past impressions from the mind. It is very easy to accumulate undesirable impressions by exposing ourselves to negative forces. But it is very difficult to destroy them. Meditation is a process of churning which replaces the bad impressions with good ones. Those who practise regular meditation will not be easily carried away by negative emotions. They develop tremendous mental strength which enables them to keep harmful emotions perfectly under their control.

5. Prayer:

Self-effort alone is not enough to fight against this deadly enemy, lust. One needs superhuman strength to encounter it. Self-effort when combined with God's grace makes the task easy. To receive divine grace, in order to conquer lust, it is necessary to pray to God with a sincere heart. Lord is the strength of the weak. He will certainly listen to the prayer of a sincere aspirant, who seeks His help to overcome animal passions. Let us pray in this manner: "O Lord, the support of the lowly, the strength of the weak, my heart is burning with lustful emotions. My mind is weak and is always carried away by powerful, turbulent and restless senses, in spite of my efforts. To fight against this enemy is like climbing the Mount Everest. My efforts are not sufficient to encounter this enemy. I feel depressed and frustrated when I am overpowered by it. You are the embodiment of strength and virility. Please grant me that supreme, divine strength to conquer this enemy. I seek your help and grace in my sincere efforts to practise Brahmacharya. Your help, your blessings, your grace is the only support for weak minds. Since I have taken refuge in you, please don't forsake me."

6. Attitude:

It is not necessary to run away from society in order to practise Brahmacharya. While living in the world, mixing with people and leading a normal, active life one can practise Brahmacharya just by changing one's attitude. Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Vinobha Bhave, Paramahansa Yogananda lived in this world like you and me, led a very active life, mixed with people freely but were always above all temptations. How could they achieve that? By developing the right attitude. Here are few hints to cultivate that attitude :

- i) Every man should look upon every woman as his mother, sister or daughter except his wife. Similarly, every woman should look upon every man as her father, brother or son except her husband.
- ii) The Divine Mother herself has taken the form of all women in this world. Therefore, look upon every woman as the manifestation of the Divine Mother.
- iii) The Spirit within the body has no sex. Man-woman, black-white, short-tall—all these differences are only on the physical level. Self or Atman is beyond gender, caste, creed and all such attributes. Transcend the idea of body; look upon everyone as divine spirit or self or soul. Possess childlike innocence while dealing with the opposite sex. Children are free from the sex idea. Let us respect and admire the beauty of the soul, beauty of character, the beauty of purity and never be carried away by the physical appearance of man or woman. Since it is not possible to change the world, let us change ourselves. Let us change our attitude towards others and nobody will dare to approach you with a wrong motive.

7. Food:

Food plays a vital role in controlling sexual passions. One who has not been able to control his tongue, will never be able to control other senses. Food is meant for the preservation of the body and not for satisfying the palate. One should take just enough for the sustenance of the body and no more. Our diet should be healthy and well-balanced. The habit of eating in between meals must be given up. As far as possible, one must avoid rich food. Eating too much of sweets, oil, spices, chilli and tasty dishes are harmful to the practise of Brahmacharya. Over-eating leads to indigestion which makes the task more difficult.

8. Exercise:

In order to practise Brahmacharya we need to burn the excess energy in the body. Accumulated energy in the body gives rise to lustful thoughts and bad dreams. Regular physical activities or exercise such as yogasanas, walking, swimming will keep the body fit and free from diseases. A sick and weak body cannot withstand the force of lust and anger and often succumbs to temptations.

9. Will-power:

To fight against lust is not an easy task. Deep- rooted impressions are so powerful that a little carelessness or over-confidence can lead to a drastic fall. But one need not be afraid because it is difficult; it will bring great joy when we succeed in our practice. Even a little success will give us a sense of satisfaction. This is a great challenge, and heroic souls alone can accept it since it needs tremendous will-power. In order to strengthen our will, it is better to take resolutions or vows. It does not mean we are able to observe the vows completely from the very beginning, but it means that honest and sincere efforts are made in order to reach perfection.

10) Some More Suggestions:

- i. Keep away from bad habits such as smoking, drinking, drugs, etc., which excite the nervous system and stimulate sexual desire.
- ii. Keep your body, clothes and surroundings neat and clean
- iii. Be moderate in everything. Over- exertion—mental as well as physical—should be avoided.
- iv. Whenever you feel a craving for sexual indulgence take a cold water bath. It will cool down the heat of passion.
- v. If free mixing with the opposite sex gives rise to lustful thoughts causing sexual excitement in your mind, it is better to keep away from such associations.
- vi. Idle gossip and indecent talk leads to distractions of mind. Therefore, keep yourself away from such useless gossip.
- vii. Fasting twice a month (Ekadasi days) will help to curb the senses and to control the excess energy in the body.
- viii. Regular practice of pranayama, simple breathing exercises twice a day for 10 minutes at a time will make your mind calm.
- ix. 'Simple living and high thinking': let this be your motto; clothes are meant for protecting and covering the body and not for decoration. Fancy and fashionable dresses will only increase your attachment to the body, making practice of Brahmacharya difficult.
- x. Talking, listening, viewing things which stimulate the urge for sexual enjoyment should be shunned.
- xi. Always keep good company. Be selective while choosing friends. Associate with holy and noble people and avoid bad company by all means.